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C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 020837

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PK](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: PESHAWAR BOMBING UPDATE

REF: PESHAWAR 632

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary and Comment: The October 22 explosion in Peshawar's old city that killed at least seven people and wounded 40 others is a reminder that, while much of the world focuses on Pakistan's efforts to fight the export of terror, the GOP is also combating domestic terror and many other local challenges. Early speculation on motives for the blast range from a message to the Frontier Corps, which has a base nearby, to another chapter in the sectarian tensions that plague the area, to an attempt by extremists to put the local cinema out of business. Knee-jerk claims by some Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) officials that India and/or Afghanistan were involved, while widely and sharply discounted by the media, were unhelpful and irresponsible. The NWFP's senior elected official, NWFP Chief Minister Akram Durrani, was particularly disappointing when he insisted that "a foreign hand" was behind the attack. AmConsul Peshawar notes that public concern over the general law and order situation in the NWFP is growing, and that the governing MMA coalition that Durrani leads may be looking to deflect responsibility for the blast onto forces beyond its control. End Summary and Comment.

¶2. (U) NWFP law enforcement authorities are investigating the October 22 IED explosion in a Peshawar market that killed at least seven (reftel). The incident was the forth explosion in NWFP in a month, but the first with casualties. Local press editorials have noted the police's poor track record in solving similar crimes throughout Pakistan. According to the Dawn newspaper, there have been 33 terror attacks in Pakistan this year, most of them bombings. At least 230 people have been killed in the attacks, notes the paper, but there have been few related arrests and almost no trials of the accused.

¶3. (U) On October 24, most of the papers of record comment on the need to confront domestic terror and admit that, unless proven otherwise, it has been Muslim-on-Muslim, not influenced by India. Many papers specifically criticize NWFP politicians, most of whom represent religious parties, for trying to blame India or Afghanistan while two of the most discussed theories for the blast involve either extremists wanting to put a cinema out of business or Shi'a-Sunni tensions over control of a mosque in Orakzai Agency. NWFP opinion leaders also ask why security in Peshawar had not been tighter, given the series of September bombings and the large crowds in the market preparing for Eid. (Note: While the police have not identified the previous three bombings as deliberate, military authorities publicly identified all

three as IED's. End Note.)

14. (U) The Eid holiday began Sunday evening in NWFP -- a day before in the rest of the Pakistan. Amconsul Peshawar will have additional updates on the explosion once the holiday ends and officials are available for consultations.

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